

*The Divine Authority of the New
Testament prov'd and vindicated,*

9140.

IN A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

UNIVERSITY

OF

OXFORD,

At St. MARY's,

Septemb. 30th. 1711.

By T. HUMPHREYS, M.A. of Pemb. Coll.
Oxon. and Curate of *Morton-in-Marsh*.

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Printed by J. Streater, Stationer, T. and W. Boone, Booksellers in London.

To the Reverend
ARTHUR CHARLETT
D. D.
Master of *University-College*
I N O X F O R D.

Reverend SIR,

THE following Discourse (*which was preach'd when You fill'd the Vice-Chancellour's Chair*) had been publish'd upon Your first Request, had I not been conscious of its many imperfections; which deterr'd me from venturing it abroad. But since Your fresh Applications to me have ex-

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torted a Compliance, and forc'd me into
the Press, I cannot think of a better Ex-
pedient to ease my self of all Concern for
its Reception in Publick, than to lay it
with all its Faults at Your Door; and
so to derive That Censure upon You,
which I should otherwise have fallen
under my self. I am

Reverend SIR,

Your most oblig'd, and

Most humble Servant,

T. HUMPHREYS.

(I)

A
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I Theff. IV. 8.

*He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not Man, but
God, who hath also given us his Holy Spirit.*

THIS Passage of St. Paul manifestly requires the same Submission and Regard to his Precepts as to the Immediate Command of God: And that, because they were dictated and deliver'd by the Suggestion and Impulse of the Holy Spirit. Now altho' the Words of the Text do strictly relate to the Contents of one single Epistle; yet by considering the Nature and Import of them, no greater Light will appear necessary to the Composure of This, than the other Writings of the New Testament. To all which therefore I shall indifferently extend the Assertion of my Text: And in shewing how applicable it is to them, I shall observe the following Method. I shall endeavour

FIRST, to prove in General, that the Books of the
New Testament were compos'd by Inspiration.

A 3

SECOND-

SECONDLY, to specify the Measure and Degree of this Divine Light, which was afforded to the Authors of them.

My Account of which will, I hope, make the force of *St Paul's* Admonition in the Text appear; together with the extream Danger and Guilt of the Crime which He has there in view.

My FIRST Undertaking is, to shew in General that the Books of the *New Testament* were compos'd by Inspiration.

The Belief of which will appear very reasonable, if we *First* Consider what Illuminations were vouchsaf'd to the Pen-men of the Old Testament.

If the Jewish Lawgiver (the most perfect of whose Institutions, compar'd to those of Christ, deserve no greater Character than that of *weak and beggarly Elements*) did yet converse *with God face to face, as a Man speaks to his Friend*; if the Prophets (whose highest Employment it was to foretell the Times of the Gospel, and to prepare Men for its Reception) *spake as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghost*; it is highly improbable, that this Divine Person should not interest Himself in the compiling of the New Testament, who had been so far concern'd in the Composure of Writings far less important, and of such, whose greatest Perfection was Their very Subserviency to It. For it is against all *Decorum*, that the Gospel, which is founded *upon better promises*, and is of far more General Benefit and Obligation, than the Jewish Revelation, should come recommended to us with fewer and less evident Tokens of its Divinity.

Christianity was by its Entrance into the World to displace Judaism; to which yet, had ordinary Doctors and Historians been the only Introducers of it, the Law given *by Angels* had been too *steadfast* to give way: No Authority being capable to repeal, which is Inferior to that, which first establish'd it.

It is indeed objected, * That the Apostles disclaim the Title of Inspir'd Pen-men and all Pretences to that Spirit which mov'd and directed the Prophets of Old; because They do not introduce their Narrations in the Prophetick Stile with a *Thus saith the Lord*, or the like. But this only shews, that the Illumination of the Apostles was not discontinu'd, like That of the Jewish Prophets: That it was not in Them by sudden Strictures, and transient Representations of things; but by a Constant Residence and an Habitual Abode.

'Twas highly requisite in Those, whose Inspiration consisted in distinct and long-interrupted Impulses, (when the Spirit of God came afresh upon Them, and breath'd a new Warmth and Vigour thro' all the Powers of their Souls) to ascribe what They deliver'd to a Particular Suggestion: To do which had been equally impertinent in Them whose Inspiration was a Standing, Uniform Principle; whom the Spirit did not visit *at sundry Times and in divers Places*, but (as their Master promis'd) *abode with them for ever.* John 14. 16.

And as the Inspiration of the Apostles in their Compositions may be inferr'd from That vouchsaf'd to other Writers far less serviceable to Religion and the Church: So may it

Secondly, from that Assistance afforded the Apostles themselves in matters far less important, than the writing the New Testament.

Since an extraordinary Assistance of the Holy Ghost accompany'd them in their Preaching; since their Apologies before Heathen and Jewish Magistrates were (in Consequence to our Saviour's Promise) dictated to them *verbally* by the Holy Spirit, whereby yet they *added to the Church* some few of their Hearers (the most beneficial Effect of which was, to make the Gospel an Oral *Cabbala* only;) certainly they were under the same Infallible Direction, whilst communicating the Faith to all Nations and Ages, and That in a more Lasting, more Instructive Manner.

* *Spinoza's Treatise Theolog. Politic.* printed London, 1689. pag. 260. and *Letters concerning the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures*, p. 175.

A Sermon preach'd before

If the Blessed Spirit vouchsaf'd to preside over the Apostles whilst assembled in Council at Jerusalem, when only One Question was under their Debate; and warranted **Acts 15. 28.** them thus to usher in the Decision of it, *It hath seem'd good to the Holy Ghost and to Us*; it can't be suppos'd, that the same Spirit forlook them when compiling a standing Rule of Faith and Manners for all Christians, which was for ever to determine all Religious Differences.

Eph. 4. 12. The Reason why Christ gave any supernatural *Gifts unto Men* was *the Edifying of his Body the Church*. To suppose then that they were withheld by Him, when they would most have promoted this End, and that He liberally imparted them, when they were less conducing to it, is a most absurd Scheme of his Proceedings, disagreeable to Reason, and much more to the Wisdom of the Donor.

Thirdly, Prejudice and Prepossessions of Education utterly disabled the Apostles to learn the Gospel by their Conversation and Intercourse with their Master in his life time; on which alone, They who reject the Inspiration, found the Authority of their Writings.

The Apostles, whilst yet *Babes in Christ*, could not digest some of the most necessary Truths of Christianity. Many Fundamental Articles of our Faith contradicted those Principles, which They had been educated in a constant and zealous Profession of; which the early Instruction of Parents had endear'd, and the Authority of Rabbies had made even sacred to them. 'Twas therefore necessary, that they should be let into the Truth leisurely, and as they were able to bear it. Had the whole Scheme of the Gospel been display'd to their Understandings at one View, or not imparted to them by gentle and easie Steps; its manifold irreconcilable Opposition to those Errors, which they entertain'd with the greatest Reverence, would have endanger'd their Stedfastness, would have too much exercis'd their Faith.

Mark 9. 10. When our Saviour did but mention to them some concerning Doctrines, the Confusion and Amazement they were under shew'd how unqualified they were yet to receive them; How fatal to his Followers a full and open
10. 26.
Joh. 16. 17. Proposal

Proposal of the Faith had been, before the Holy Ghost had made way for it's Admission.

With a Particular Reference to these Truths, and very Applicably to our present Purpose, our Lord thus closes one of his last Discourses to his Disciples; *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now: Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He shall lead you into all Truth.* Than which Words, none can be conceiv'd a fuller Proof of the Apostle's Inspiration; or more direct and home against the Hypothesis of it's Adversaries: Since in Them our Lord expressly refers his Disciples to the Holy Ghost, for a full Knowledge of the Gospel; and disowns that He either had, or thro' Their Infirmary cou'd impart it to them; when yet *that Hour* was now *at hand*, which would for ever cut off all familiar Commerce betwixt Him and Them.

Fourthly, The Absolute Infallibility, and consequently the Inspiration of the Apostles in publishing the Gospel, may be collected from that Miraculous Confirmation, which then constantly attended, when deliver'd by them.

Since the Holy Ghost always enabled them to confirm their Message by Miracles even *greater* than those of their Master (as he himself had foretold;) had They been liable to mistake in their Delivery of it, Error and Untruth might have been recommended to our Assent by the Attestation of Heaven; and the Testimony of those who were sent would have even subverted the Authority of Him that sent them.

It is contrary to the Wisdom of God, that the Power of Miracles (That sure *Criterion*, and, as it were, publick Voucher of the Truth of any Revelation it goes along with) should be entrusted with those who might ignorantly misapply it; or might use it to confirm their innocent Mistakes, or to warrant even their grossest Prejudices by Divine Authority.

'Tis pretended indeed, * *that the Gift of Miracles is not necessarily accompany'd with Infallibility: Because if so, the generality of Christians at the first Preaching of the Go-*

* Five Letters of the Inspiration of the Scriptures, pag. 64, 65.

Mark 16. 17. *spel (when, as our Lord promis'd, the most stupendous Signs followed such as did believe) had been Infallible; And because it appears from St Paul's Epistles to the Church of*
 1 Cor. 1. 5, *Corinth, that it's members had very plentifully receiv'd this*
 6, 7. *Gift of the Holy Ghost, and yet needed of that Apostle farther*
 Cor. passim. *Instruction to resolve their Doubts, and even rectify their Errors.*

To this we reply, That altho' the Power of Miracles doth not argue the Persons invest'd with it to be universally exempt from Error; tho' all things pronounc'd by such are not the infallible Decisions of Him that gave them their Commission: Yet are they privileg'd from Mistake in delivering Those Truths, which such Miracles are wrought to confirm. So that shou'd God foresee that his Embassadors to Mankind were about to misrepresent his Mind and Will; his Veracity obliges him, either immediately to enlighten and undeceive, or to resume the great Credential he hath given them. And my present Argument doth not imply any greater Share of Infallibility than this, to be inseparable from the Gift of Miracles. It only supposes, that whilst the Apostles preach'd and wrote in pursuance of their Commission (*the Lord, as St Mark expresses it, working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following*) they were absolutely Infallible. And under this Limitation, we deny that any gifted Person in any part of the Primitive Church was liable to Error.

Mark 16.
20.

Since therefore it is most irrational to suppose, that the God of Truth should solemnly ratify and authorise Error; and in the same Degree absurd, that the Apostles should deliver the Gospel with any mixture of Untruth, (whose Publication of it was attended and favour'd with an Infinity of Wonders, the most convincing Testimony of God's Approbation;) it unavoidably follows, that the same Power which thus enabled them to confirm the Gospel, guarded them against all Error in delivering it; particularly in the Composure of those Writings, which are the standing Rule of Faith to the Christian Church: Any mistake in which had been of far worse Consequence to our Religion, than a much Greater in their Preaching, or any other Method of their publishing it. *Lastly,*

Lastly, the Infallibility and Inspiration of the Apostles may be argued from the exprefs Declarations of our Saviour. He promis'd that *the Spirit of Truth* should teach Joh. 14. 26. them *all things*; should lead them *into all Truth*, all that Joh. 16. 13. they were ignorant of, and yet concern'd them to know; that the same *Spirit of Truth* should *abide with them* for Joh. 14. 16. ever. Which words whoever have apply'd to themselves, have by virtue of them laid claim to Infallibility; and which are an undoubted Promise of Supernatural Assistance to the Apostles in the Performance of their Function; and which, since the principal Act of Their Ministry was their Compiling a Rule of Faith and Manners for Christians, certainly receiv'd in It the most eminent Completion.

Which will farther appear, if we measure the extent of these Promises with That which is the best Interpreter of them, their Execution; and consider how the Pen-men of the New Testament ascribe in such a manner several Parts of it to Inspiration, as implies that the Whole was compos'd by the Impulse, and under the Direction of the Holy Ghost.

For instance; St *Peter* asserts, that St *Paul* wrote His 2 Pet. 3. 15. Epistles not in the strength of his Natural sagacity, or of his Improvements *at the Feet of Gamaliel*, but according to *the Wisdom that was given unto him*. And St *Paul* in his 1 Tim. 5. 18. first Epistle to *Timothy*, having cited the Gospel of St *Luke* Lukc 10. 2. under the General Title of *Scripture*, in the second affirms, 2 Tim. 3. 16. that *All Scripture was given by Inspiration*. And our Adversaries surely will not pretend that any greater Measure of this was necessary to Indite the Gospel of St *Luke*, than the Narratives of the other Evangelists; or to compose the Epistles of St *Paul*, than those of his Fellow-Apostles; or that any foregoing Part of the New Testament requir'd a greater degree of Illumination in it's Composition, than the last Mysterious and entirely Prophetical part of it.

Add to this, That since our Adversaries profess * to believe the Truth of those Writings, whose Inspiration they

* Five Letters &c. pag. 28, 29, 109, 130.

disallow; it behoves them to consider, that the same Tradition, both Written and Unwritten, which certifies them of the Former, is universal and express in Favour of the Latter; That as numerous Testimonies of those Ages, which have handed down these Books to us, may be produc'd to shew that the Holy Ghost was concern'd in their Composition, as to prove them compos'd by the reputed Authors of them.

And since the immediate Disciples of the Apostles were capable of learning from their Mouths, of committing to writing, and delivering to their Successors both the One and the Other of these Doctrines, with the same Exactness; we must own, that the Authority of the Universal Church is an equally competent proof of Both: And therefore something besides Reason and Argument occasions these Truths under the same advantages of Proposal, to be receiv'd so differently by our Adversaries; and makes them hold fast the † One upon the Credit of Catholick unerring Tradition, and yet reject the Other thus signally co-attested by it.

Having thus in some measure shewn the Books of the New Testament in General to have been compos'd by Inspiration; I proceed in the

SECOND Place, To specify the Proportion and Degree of that Divine Light, which was afforded to the Authors of them.

And here the necessary Limits of this Discourse will only at present allow me to consider, with what Measure of Divine Illumination the Histories of the New Testament were compos'd; how far the Holy Ghost assisted the Authors of them in recording what they had seen & heard.

For say our Adversaries, * *To relate matters of Fact, which Men have seen and well observ'd, requires no Inspiration; That it is a superfluous Miracle to acquaint them in a supernatural way, with what the concurrent and most authentick Testimony of their Senses had already notify'd to them.*

† Five Letters &c. pag. 210, 224. * Pag. 14 and 31, of Five Letters &c.

Now altho' to shew the Inconsequence of this Argument, it be enough to say, That God, when Propounding Things to the Belief of Men, doth often more for their Conviction than what is barely necessary; That, for Instance, *to shew more abundantly to the Heirs of Promise the Immutability of his Counsel, he confirm'd His Word by His Oath; that by two immutable Things*, either of which had been a sufficient Support of their Hopes and Confidence, *they might have a strong Consolation*; That again, tho' the Miracles related by the Evangelists do abundantly confirm our Lord's Divine Commission and Authority: Yet St John hath inform'd us, that infinitely more of his mighty Works were omitted than recorded by Him; so few of which therefore being capable of obtaining the general End of all, the endless Variety had, according to the aforesaid Objection, been inconsistent with the Wisdom of their Author. I say, altho' this general Reply to our Adversaries be sufficient; yet, that this Discourse may the more fully answer it's Design, I shall not content my self with it; but according to the propos'd Method, shall proceed to give an Account of the Degree of Inspiration vouchsaf'd to the Historians of the New Testament.

Heb. 6. 17.

Joh. 21. 25.

In delivering of which I shall choose to govern my self by the clear Intimations or express Authority of Scripture; whence, I think, these two Propositions are fairly deducible,

First, That the Holy Ghost did not so far discover to the Historians of the New Testament what they had learnt by their Senses, as to make the Information of These useless.

Secondly, That their Sense and Experience did not in this Case supersede the Necessity of a Divine Assistance.

First, The Holy Ghost did not so far discover to the Historians of the New Testament what they had learnt by their Senses, as to make the Information of These useless.

Had the Authority of what the Apostles deliver'd been so far grounded on their Inspiration, as to render all Re-

A Sermon preach'd before

1 John 1.
1, 3.

course to their Memories and Experience in the Proof of it needless, it were Impossible to account for that reiterated Appeal, which St *John* makes to his Senses in the Entrance of his first Epistle; *That which we have heard, (says he) which we have seen with our Eyes, which we have look't upon, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto You.*

Acts 1. 21.
22.

Had the Infallibility of the Apostles, in publishing the Life and Actions of our Saviour, entirely rely'd upon the suggestion of the Holy Ghost, and not in a great measure upon the Testimony of their Senses; why did St *Peter* account a constant attendance upon our Saviour, from his Baptism till his Ascension, a necessary Qualification for an Apostle? Why did he esteem such alone proper to succeed *Judas*, and attest our Lord's *Resurrection*, who had accompany'd the Apostles *all the Time that He went in and out among them, beginning at the Baptism of John, till the same day that He was taken up from them?* What conceivable reason is there, why such alone were fit Candidates for the Apostolate, who had enjoy'd a three-years Conversation with our Lord; except the peculiar Advantage they had of learning by their Eyes and Ears, what the Apostles were to teach all Nations?

Joh. 15. 26,
27.

But what I contend for is confirm'd by a higher Testimony than either of *Cephas* or *John*, even by the great *Author and Finisher of our Faith*; Who, in one of his last Discourses to his Apostles, resolves their Authority into the joint Testimony of the *Holy Ghost speaking in them*, and of their own Sense and Memories. *When the Comforter (says he) is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, He shall testify of me; and Ye also shall bear Witness, because Ye have been with me from the beginning.* In which Words, our Lord, immediately after his Promise of the Holy Ghost to his Apostles, mentions their Attendance on Him during his Prophetick Office, as qualifying them to propagate the Gospel; and thereby shews beyond all Contradiction, that the Information they had receiv'd, during that Period in a Human way, would never

be

be superseded by the Light and Power they should be *endued with from on High*.

St Paul indeed, who had no Intercourse with our Saviour in the days of his Flesh; who was an Unbeliever and Persecutor of the Church long after his Ascension; He, that His Authority might not be inferior to That of the chiefest Apostles, had, as appears from many Passages of his Epistles, especially of that to the *Galatians*, a Particular Revelation of the whole Gospel to him; such an one as descended to the minutest Occurrences that are registered by the Evangelists. Galat. 1. 11, 12.

But because the Gospel was thus communicated to an Apostle *born out of due time*, none can infer it to have been imparted the same way to the early and constant Companions of our Lord, in whose immediate Hearing and Presence, he utter'd all his Discourses and perform'd his Miracles.

Thus it undeniably appears, that the Assistance vouchsaf'd by the Holy Ghost to the Historians of the New Testament did not make useless the Information they receiv'd from their Senses. And

Secondly, It is equally evident, that their Sense and Experience did not in this Case supersede the Necessity of a Divine Assistance. For

1st. This was necessary to strengthen their Memories, that they might faithfully retain what they had seen and heard. If we consider the great Variety of things recorded by the Evangelists; and among These especially the numerous Discourses of our Saviour, of which many were deliver'd long before his Death, tho' never till his Ascension understood by his Hearers, nor yet committed to Writing so soon; If we make these Reflections upon the Evangelists and their Histories, without supposing their Memories to have been supernaturally refresh'd, we may justly suspect the Truth and Exactness of their Relations.

And considering what a severe Perusal their Gospels underwent at their first Publication, with what Care they were compar'd with each other by Men of the greatest subtilty, the same Assistance was requisite, not only lest they

they should forget and omit what most deserv'd their Notice and Remembrance; but lest any Disagreement between their four Narratives should furnish matter of Cavil and Triumph to *the Disputer of this World*.

Joh. 14. 26. And that This is no airy, conjectural Argument for the Proof of the Proposition I'm upon, appears from the Express Promise of our Saviour; *The Comforter* (says he) *which is the Holy Ghost, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your Remembrance*, i. e. my Sermons, Parables and Predictions; which nothing less than this Heavenly Influence could have made portable to your Memories.

2dly. If we compare the Brevity of the Four Gospels, and that immense variety of Matter, with which our Saviour's Life furnish'd the Evangelists; we may infer, that they were guided by the Holy Ghost, in the Choice of such Particulars as would be the most proper and usefull Subjects of their Histories; nothing less than the Immediate Direction of the Blessed Spirit cou'd warrant their Silence of any thing our Saviour did or taught in the Capacity of Messiah.

All his Miracles had one general Aim, viz. The Conviction of Mankind; In all his Publick Discourses, he spake with the Authority of a Prophet: And how cou'd Their Unassisted Reason assure them, that they might innocently omit any Thing He perform'd with That Intention, or utter'd under This Character?

Joh. 21. 25. Since, therefore, a compleat History of his Life and Ministry would have far exceeded in length the Present Accounts of it, (to illustrate which, St John tells us, that *the World it self would not contain a Narrative of the Miracles He had pass'd over in Silence*;) the actual Conduct of the Holy Ghost was necessary, both to rectify their numerous Omissions, and to direct them how to give Us the Best and most Instructive Specimens of what He did and taught.

3dly. The same was necessary to inform the Evangelists, for Whose Use and Instruction They were to compose the Gospels.

That

That the Benefits of Christianity were to be equally exhibited to all Nations, our Saviour did indeed in his Life-time intimate in many of his Discourses, and expressly deliver in his last Commission to his Apostles. But considering how the ancient Prerogatives of the Jews, (which exalted that of *Abraham* above all the Families of the Earth,) indispos'd them to receive this Levelling Doctrine; and withall, how many of our Saviour's Discourses, in Compliance with their Prejudices; tended even to confirm their low Opinions of the Gentiles; we must own, that something more than his Instructions on Earth was necessary to correct this Mistake, and to convince the Apostles that their Embassy was to all the Tribes of Mankind.

Mar. 13. 10.
Luk 24. 47.

And accordingly St Paul in his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, having said that Christ in the Flesh *preach'd Peace* indifferently to those who were far off, and those that were nigh, doth not yet ascribe the Apostles Knowledge of this Truth to any Information they had receiv'd from their Master's Doctrine and Example, but to the immediate suggestion of the Holy Ghost; resolving the Discovery of this so long conceal'd Mystery, that the Gentiles were to be *Fellow-heirs and of the same Body, and Partakers of the same Promises* with the Jews, into no other cause, than that it had been reveal'd unto the Apostles & Evangelical Prophets by the Spirit.

Ephes. 4. 17.

Ephes. 3. 3;
5. 6.

And the Truth of what I assert will more fully appear, if we reflect, that a Vision thrice repeated was necessary to satisfy S. Peter of the Lawfulness of even conversing with the Gentiles, and a Particular Impulse of the Holy Ghost to induce Him to it; and how This his Belief and Practice were censur'd by those of the Circumcision; with what Difficulty they were persuaded, with what amazement they at last acknowledg'd, that God had granted to the Gentiles Repentance unto Life.

Act. 10. 11.
&c.

Act. 10. 28.

Act. 11. 2.

Act. 11. 18.

Had therefore the Ignorance and Errors of the Apostles, or our Saviour's Death, not been supernaturally remov'd, the Great and Generous Design of the Gospel had been frustrated;

C

frustrated;

That

frustrated; the Evangelists had address'd themselves to only one dark Corner of the World, and thereby the Advantages of the Jewish and Christian Revelation had been confin'd to the same Narrow Enclosure.

A 4th. Instance of the necessity of the Holy Ghost's Assistance to the Evangelists was, his enabling them to discern the Conformity of our Lord's Life and Actions to the Types and Characters of the Messiah in the Old Testament; which they could not have done by the Dint of their own Observation.

'Twas requisite that these Types and Characters should be deliver'd with some Mixture of Obscurity, in order to their Completion. Had their Accomplishment in our Saviour been so conspicuous, as to bear down the Prejudices of the Jews by it's overpowering Evidence, and irresistibly to break thro' the *Veil* which was upon their Heart in the reading of the Old Testament; I say, had the Betrayers and Crucifiers of our Lord thus known Him and the Voices of their Prophets, and withall, retain'd their Natural Freedom of Acting; it is against Scripture and Reason to suppose, that they would ever have fulfill'd them in Condemning Him.

AA. 13. 17.

By reason of this then necessary Obscurity, Inspiration was not more requisite to record and deliver them at first, than to expound them when accomplish'd; to shew how they receiv'd a most exact and circumstantial Completion in the Birth of our Lord, and all the accidents of his Life from the Manger to the Cross.

The Application of These when fulfill'd to their respective Events and Anti-types, was the proper use of the supernatural *Word of Knowledge*, mention'd by St Paul in his Catalogue of Gifts, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians; who in the same Epistle expressly ascribes to the Holy Ghost his comparing Spiritual things with Spiritual, the Revelations of the Old Testament with Those of the New.

1 Cor. 12. 8.
compar'd
with Ch. 2.
12, 13.
Gros. in lo-
cum.

To illustrate and confirm this by one signal Instance: when our Lord had made his Entrance into Jerusalem,

Joh. 12. 12.

with

with all the Ceremony that had been usual at the Inauguration of the Jewish Kings; His Followers never, till the Reception of the Holy Ghost, discover'd the meaning of this Solemnity, or it's most exact and circumstantial correspondence to a Prediction in the Old Testament. *These things, says St. John, understood not his Disciples at the first; but when Jesus was Glorify'd,* (which had both an immediate and Causal Connexion with the Descent of the Holy Ghost,) *then remembred they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him.*

Zach. 9. 9.
Joh. 12. 16.

Admitting therefore that the Evangelists, with an unparallel'd Degree of Retention, could have recorded all the Passages of our Saviour's Life, by the strength of their own Observation; yet had they been Uninspir'd, their Gospels had been most Unedifying and Imperfect, thro' their Ignorance that many Prophecies of the Old Testament had any reference to their Master, and were fulfill'd in Him.

And what upon this supposition had yet further unqualify'd them to give any tolerable account of Him, was, their gross Misunderstanding of other Predictions, which They with truth expected Him to accomplish.

Tho' the Spirit of God in the Old Testament *testify'd* as clearly the *Sufferings of Christ, as the Glory that should follow*; yet the Jews, in forming Their Idea of Him, had only regard to their Prophets Descriptions of the latter: And these being full of Allusion to the Grandeur and Magnificence of Earthly Kingdoms, led that whole People into a Mistake, (from which not One of our Lord's Disciples was exempted,) that *the Kingdom of Christ, so magnify'd in the Prophetick Stile, was to be a Temporal One; no other than the Kingdom of his Royal Ancestor David restor'd and enlarg'd.*

Isaiah 53.

Acts 1. 6.

Now the Evangelists were not only incapable of giving any rational Account of the Gospel, but even of yielding an hearty unfeign'd Assent to it, till they were rescu'd from this Error; till the Holy Ghost had open'd

their Understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures; had satisfy'd Them, that it behov'd Christ to Suffer; that His Passion, contrary to their carnal Apprehensions, was not only consistent with the Character He laid claim to, but really entitled Him to it.

5. Letters
p. 228, 229,
and foll.

Had they never expected any other Redemption from the Messiah, than his *restoring the Kingdom to Israel*; Christ Crucify'd must have appear'd as much an Inconsistency to Them, as it was *unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks Foolishness*: Upon this Supposition, Their Memory of our Lord's Life and Actions (on which our Adversaries found the Authority of Their Gospel) had prov'd the very Reason of their Apostacy.

Nay, to advance one step farther: They ow'd to a Particular Illumination, not only their knowledge of many Special and most Important Doctrines contain'd in the Gospels, but that most Fundamental One which they all suppose, in our Disbelief of which our Denial of all the rest is involv'd, viz. *That Jesus is the Christ the Son of God.*

When St. Peter, in the name of his Fellow-Apostles, *had profess'd his Belief of this great Article (which is as much the Basis of the Christian, as the Belief of a Deity is of Natural Religion;)* Our Lord immediately adds, *that Flesh and Blood had not reveal'd it unto Him, but His Father which was in Heaven.*

So far is it therefore from Truth, that the Apostles in their Histories have represented to us barely what they learnt in a Human Way, by Conversation and Intercourse with their Master, that on the contrary they deriv'd the Knowledge of that Truth, on which He built his Church, from Immediate Revelation.

Had the Evangelists been ignorant of this Grand Article, (into the sole belief of which some have shrunk our whole Christian Faith,) Their Histories of our Lord had been as absurd, and probably as contradictory to each other, as were the conjectures of the Jews about Him; of whom,

some

some thought Him to be *John the Baptist*, some *Elias*, and others *Jeremias*, or *One of the Prophets*. Mat. 16. 14

Lastly; If we compare the unparallel'd Sufferings which attended the first Publication of our Faith, with that fearful, irresolute Temper which the Preachers of it betray'd before our Saviour's Death, we can scarce imagine, but, had They not been supported by the Holy Ghost, they would have abandon'd the Truth of the Gospel, and thro' Cowardice have either suppress'd or misrepresented it.

In the Conclusions of all the Evangelists, they are set forth to Us under the meanest and most abject Impressions of Fear; which yet after a short interval, in some of the first Chapters of the *Acts*, they appear to have entirely dismiss'd, and to have exchange'd for the most Heroick Firmness, the most Christian Resolution. And into what Cause we ought to resolve this sudden and wonderfull Change in the Conduct of these Men, we may learn from their Unanimous Prayer and the Success of it, recorded in the fourth Chapter of the *Acts*: *And now, Lord, be- Acts 4. 29, hold their Threatnings; & grant unto Thy Servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word. And when v. 31. they had pray'd, the place was shaken where they were assembled; and they were all fill'd with the Holy Ghost, and spake the Word with boldness; which had they not been animated to by the Divine Spirit, they had probably conceal'd, or undoubtedly publish'd it with too much Caution and Reservedness.*

And if at any time a too tender Regard for Life might tempt them to disobey the Gentle Motions of the Spirit, it is reasonable to suppose, that the Impulses and Instigations of it became more Violent; that it's Force and Efficacy upon their Pens and Tongues became Irresistible.

That this Almighty Agent will not allow the Persons He actuates and enlightens, to preserve themselves from Shame and Danger by resisting His Impulses and stifling His Gifts, appears from the 20th Chapter of *Jeremiah*, *Jer. 20. 8, 9.* where the Prophet thus speaks of himself; *Because the Word*

Word of the Lord was made a Reproach unto me, and a Derision daily: I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in his Name. But his Word was in my Heart as a Burning Fire shut up in my Bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

The ordinary Influences of the Holy Ghost may indeed be frustrated by such as receive Them, because they aim only at Their own Benefit; and may therefore be withheld to their single Disadvantage: But the Divine Goodness will not suffer Us to think, that they who are *the Light of the World* may stifle the Extraordinary Illuminations vouchsaf'd Them, or may perversly withstand the Motions, upon their compliance with which the greatest and most universal Happiness of others depends.

The Supernatural Assistance therefore vouchsaf'd to the Historians of the New Testament, consisted in strengthening and refreshing their Memories, and selecting out of the Infinity of our Saviour's Miracles and Discourses, such as they should most usefully transmit to Future Ages; in satisfying them, that it was Lawfull for them equally to employ their Pens in the Conversion of Jew and Gentile; and in enabling them to represent to Both, the exact Accomplishment of the Ancient Prophecies in the Life and Actions of our Lord; and particularly, to reconcile many of them with the Spiritual Nature of his Kingdom; and even in making known to them (the General Subject of all the Gospels) His very Nature and Messiah-ship: lastly, in prompting and encouraging them to deliver their Message; and, if Occasion requir'd, constraining them to it, in despite of all that was either Pleasant or Terrible in Nature.

Now if the Holy Ghost was so far concern'd in the Composition of these sacred Writings, certainly to treat them with Railery and Contempt is virtually to revile that Divine Person, and, in the Language of the Text, to *despise God, not Man.*

And there can scarce be assign'd a more hardy and daring Provocation, than thus to *do despite to the Spirit*

of Grace. The blackest Ingredient of that Sin which our Lord pronounc'd Unpardonable, and that which made it so exceedingly Sinfull, was Men's ascribing Miracles wrought by the Holy Ghost to the Power of Magick. This was an Aggravation of the otherwise rankest and most obstinate Infidelity: From this it receiv'd such an extraordinary, advanc'd Guilt, as to stand singly excepted in Our Lord's General Act of Indemnity, the Gospel of Peace.

And if Unbelief, any otherwise circumstantiated than in the Case of the Blasphemous Pharisees, can be thought to be the Sin against the Holy Ghost; certainly it becomes such by an Infidel's attributing the Scriptures, given by Inspiration, to Enthusiasm and Imposture.

In the former Case, Men revile and resist the Blessed Spirit, as Manifesting Himself in his supernatural Gifts of Power, in Healing Diseases, and Casting out Devils, and the like. In the latter, they blasphemously oppose the equally Miraculous Gifts of Illumination, which proceeded from One and the same Spirit; most or all of which were employ'd in the Composition of the Sacred Writings.

And if We consider, how necessarily the Latter Instance of Contempt supposes and involves in it the Former, since the Authority of all Inspir'd Persons was confirm'd by their Own or Other Persons Miracles;) and withall reflect, that the Eye-witnesses of our Lord's mighty Works were betray'd into their obstinate Resistance of Truth by the Prejudices of Education, (which conspire with Reason and Argument to prevent the Apostacy, and silence the blasphemy of Our Modern Infidels;) it will be hard to determine, which of the Two are to be esteem'd the more detestably Sinfull; whether we consider the Guilt, as looking it's Proportion from the Dignity of the Divine Person they have offended, or from the Degree of those temptations they have yielded to, or the Measure of that Divine Light they have resisted.

I shall conclude with that excellent Argument of the Author to the Hebrews; *If the Law given by Moses was* ^{Hebr. 2. 2;} *fast,* ^{3, 4.} *and They who despis'd it's Authority, perish without Mercy; How shall We escape if We neglect so great*

A Sermon preach'd before Ec.

great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was afterward confirm'd to Us by Them that heard Him; God also bearing them Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost:

To whom, with the Father and the Son, be ascrib'd all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Majesty, Now and for Ever. Amen.

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